

We hear about being fair again this week

It is in a little different context than last week

But the essence is the same

Who is it that is not fair?

Are we judging by human standards or God's?

In our first reading

The Israelites are having an argument with God

We are not given the details behind this

But do see God's judgment

Two situations are described

A sinner that turns to virtue

And a virtuous man that turns to evil

God rewards the first

And condemns the second

Like those hired first last week

They thought they earned their reward

But at the core of the relationship was a gift

And gratitude was lacking

The first person in today's reading did not earn their reward

It is not like all our good deeds are put into a bank account

And then we draw against them when we choose wrongly

Have you ever heard this excuse for not going to Sunday Mass?

I went to Catholic school

I went to Mass 2 x or 5 x every week for the entire school year

And so now I don't have to go

Going to a Catholic school is an opportunity

We are not banking up merits

Hopefully we are building up a relationship

This would be like a mom telling her family

You know, I cooked 365 dinners for you last year

For the next year

I will only cook once a month

As if this would average out in a healthy way

God looks at not what we say we want to do

He looks at what we actually do or don't do

This is what our Gospel points to

When you read the Gospel in context

Today's question comes after Jesus speaking about John the Baptist

He asked the leaders where does John's baptism come from

Men or God

If they replied God, he would ask them why they don't follow John

If they said it was only from men

They would have the people rise up against them

So they refuse to answer

Today's story puts this in a new perspective

There is a man with 2 sons

He asks the first to go to the family vineyard

Recall last week's story about the family vineyard

But the son refuses

He also disrespects his father in his refusal

Later he has a change of heart and goes

In the meantime, the father goes to the second son

This one does not disrespect the father

He replies he will go right away

But he never goes

Jesus asks: Which one did the will of the father?

They recognize an aspect of obedience

It is not about what they say

But obedience is tied to action

To what they actually do

Then Jesus tells them something they cannot fathom

Tax collectors and prostitutes will enter the kingdom of God

before they will

He does not tell them they will be replaced

It is just that their role will not be as they expect

They knew that actions mattered

And yet it was the tax collectors and sinners that went to John

They asked what they should do

And when John told them to repent

Turn back to God and start fresh

They got in line to be baptized

Their no to God was changed to a yes

Something the religious leaders thought was beneath them

These aspects of obedience can affect every one of us

Does my life, my choices, my actions reflect my words?

Or am I good at making a case for my faith

But refuse to live it with my life?

We are not patriots by waving the flag on July 4th

Patriotism is how we live; the choices we make

Voting, paying taxes, community involvement

These everyday things are how we live our patriotism

The same things in our marriages and religious life

It is not about the day you stood up and said your vows and promises

As beautiful and necessary as these are

These are only the beginning

They flourish in the daily and momentary sacrifices that is our life

There can be a gap in all our lives between what we say and do

So when we recognize that

When we see our lives are closer to the 2nd son

And our actions are not in line with our words

We return to the Lord

Christ humbled himself when he became man

He became obedient to the point of death

So we might be forgiven

And cleansed from our sin

The New Covenant was not cheap

It was purchased for us

The cost?

The passion, death and resurrection of Christ

And it is available for all of us

If we are humble enough to accept it and follow

To embrace the fact that we are sinners

And to open our hearts to receive His grace

To make a fresh start

Uniting our words and actions

To walk with Him in this life

So we might be with Him for eternal life

Can we ask for anything more fair?